

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 8 December 2000

Subject: **Chief Executive's Report**

This report is for the Committee's information.

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**1. Staffing and accommodation**

- 1.1 Members should be aware that our Head of Secretariat, Susan Traver, has been appointed as Head of Organisational Development with the newly merged Gas and Electricity Consumer Council. Susan concluded her employment with the Assembly on 24 November. As a result of reviewing the vacancy the job was redefined as Head of Administration and Company Secretary. Interviews were held on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> October, with the assistance of Assembly Vice-Chair Mike Geddes. I am pleased to say that we were able to appoint an excellent candidate from a strong field. Subject to the formal exchange of letters I will be able to inform the meeting verbally of the name of the appointee, who will hopefully be able to start with us immediately after the Christmas break.
- 1.2 Regional Planning Director Mike Gwilliam commences with the Assembly on 11 December. Negotiations have been underway for some time on the employment of SERPLAN staff, and an offer has now been made in respect of one regional planner post. A proposal to retain the services of at least one further member of SERPLAN staff is under discussion. I have also taken steps to ensure that staff can be seconded to the Assembly ahead of April 2001 in the event of SERPLAN closing its operation earlier than the end of the financial year.

## **2. Regional networking**

- 2.1 A dinner on 28 November involving Regions Minister Hilary Armstrong, and RDA and Assembly chairs was organised through the North West Regional Assembly as current secretariat of the English Regions Network (ERN). Both David Shakespeare and I attended; SEEDA Deputy Chairman Ken Bodfish attended on Allan Willett's behalf. There was a full discussion with the Minister covering RDA/Assembly relations, RDA powers and funding, and the Government's efforts to 'join up' its agenda in the regions. There was a perception between RDA and Assembly chairs that a number of areas of common cause could be identified, and agreement that it would be useful for the event to be repeated periodically.
- 2.2 While there is by no means common ground amongst English regional assemblies in respect of the future regional agenda, there was agreement that ERN meetings might in future include invitations to colleagues from both London and Wales to describe the lessons from their regional experiences. Deputy Mayor of London, Nicky Gavron, has agreed to attend the next meeting of the Network on 23 January for this purpose.

## **3. Planning and transport**

- 3.1 The most recently predicted date for the publication of Regional Planning Guidance for the SERPLAN area is 14 December. At the same time an eight week consultation will be carried out on the Government's proposed housing distribution figures, concluding in mid-February. SERPLAN convenes on 19 December and has undertaken to co-ordinate any collective view in response to this consultation. The Assembly's Planning Committee meets again on 10 January.
- 3.2 The pan-regional planning protocol with London and the East of England was signed on 7 November. The South East has taken the first rotation of Chair and Secretariat for the joint advisory forum, and the first meeting will take place in February. The five members nominated to the forum from this region are Cllr Nick Skellett (Chair of the Planning Committee) Cllr Mike Skinner (Vice-Chair)

of the Regional Transport Strategy. A post conference press release was issued highlighting the strong level of support for the principle of congestion charging. Attendees will shortly receive a detailed pack of feedback from the conference.

- 3.4 The Assembly received the Final Report of the Access to Hastings Multi Modal Study on 1 December. We are charged with advising the Secretary of State on the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Study. The Regional Planning Committee will consider the report at its meeting on 10 January. A report will then be prepared for the next meeting of this Committee before the final debate at the Assembly Plenary session on 14 February, at which the formal recommendation to the Secretary of State will need to be agreed. The Access to Hastings Multi Modal Study is the first of the Government's studies to report and it is anticipated that it will attract significant media attention. Other studies expected to report in the near future are the M27 South Hampshire Integrated Transport Study and A3 Hindhead Roads Based Study, both of which will be passed to the Regional Assembly for its consideration and advice.

#### **4. Communications**

- 4.1 During October and November to date the following press releases have been disseminated to national, regional, local and specialist media (most recent first):

- Healthy Region Forum
- Assembly plenary
- Transport conference survey findings
- Pan regional planning protocol signing with GLA
- Sustainable Development Framework
- Social Inclusion Select Committee outcomes
- Transport conference, 1 November
- Area Cost Adjustment
- South Central rail franchise
- New Regional Planning Committee

All press releases are available on the Assembly website.

4.3 In all, since April 2000 to date the Regional Assembly has issued:

- 15 news releases to target media including national, regional, local and specialist print and broadcast correspondents resulting in:
  - 39 articles in national, regional, local and specialist print media and coverage on 8 local radio stations in the region;
  - 8 follow up interviews done by Assembly representatives.

4.4 Press releases are circulated by e-mail to Assembly members and their Public Relations Officers (PROs) where we have e-mail addresses. The Head of Communications is writing a follow up letter to the PRO network outlining the new protocol to enable member PROs to localise Assembly press releases, and inviting PRO feedback on this system.

4.5 The members' survey has been piloted and will be with members by the time of the Committee meeting for return before Christmas. The results will help us to continually improve our performance in meeting - and hopefully exceeding - members' expectations, and will also feed into our business plan for 2001-02.

## **5. Financial report**

5.1 Table 1 below shows the financial outturn to the end of November 2000, and the projected outturn to the year end. The budget is on course to break even, although the extent of our activity this year means that the Assembly finances remain extremely tight. The anticipated income from the European Commission cannot now be counted upon owing to rethinking in Brussels and changes at the London office; in turn staffing expenses arising as a result of this grant will be avoided, so the impact is cost neutral.

**Table 1: SEERA Ltd - financial summary to end November 2000**

		<b>TO</b>		
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>INITIAL</b>	<b>30/11</b>	<b>PROJECTED</b>	
Subscription Income	460000	460350	460350	
European Commission	30000	0	0	
Bank Interest	0	0	2500	
Brought Forward	32000	30919	30919	
	<b>522000</b>	<b>491269</b>	<b>493769</b>	
 <b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Recruitment	4000	909	910	
Salaries	240000	136257	207000	
Allowances	38000	23006	36500	
Travel and Subsistence	10000	7801	11840	
Other Expenses	10000	4232	4232	
Supplies and Services	20000	20045	24490	
Consultants	10000	27413	34381	
Publications	30000	13542	15847	
Events	10000	10059	13936	
Regional Planning Body				
Salaries	85000	31999	89500	
Recruitment	0	9692	10192	
Consultancy/Projects	50000	0	30000	
Supplies and Services	15000	12676	14940	
	<b>522000</b>	<b>297631</b>	<b>493769</b>	
 <b>SURPLUS/DEFICIT</b>	 <b>0</b>	 <b>193638</b>	 <b>0</b>	

- 6.2 The Chair has reviewed with Allan Willett liaison arrangements between the Assembly and the RDA. Instead of brief 'slots' for the Assembly and GOSE on every SEEDA Board agenda, there will be more substantive agenda items planned at three board meetings a year. In addition the Chair of the Assembly and the Chair of SEEDA will hold regular 'Keep In Touch' telephone conferences, supplemented by six-monthly meetings involving also Anthony Dunnett and myself. At an officer level, Anthony, David Saunders and I continue to meet regularly on a bilateral and trilateral basis. As a result of the recommendations of the 'Reaching Out' report (see agenda item 11), we are exploring together the proposal by Government that the three regional partners in each region should agree a 'concordat' in order to clarify and manage working relationships.

**Paul Bevan**  
**Chief Executive**

29 November 2000